

RIDLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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MS. LEE ANN WENTZEL
SUPERINTENDENT

16 October 2017

Chairman Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai,

The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Public Notice indicates changes are under consideration to the E-Rate program. Before discussing the proposed changes, I want to thank the FCC for your continued support for the E-Rate program and for the critical programmatic and policy changes the commission adopted in 2014. The E-Rate program provides critical discounts to assist schools to obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access.

Ridley School District is seated in a suburban area between the cities of Philadelphia and Chester in Delaware County of southeastern Pennsylvania. It encompasses 7.75 square miles and provides educational services to over 5,500 children. Since 2008, the district free and reduced lunch rate has more than doubled to 42.87%. The majority of funding to support our programs comes from local tax revenue at 71%. The opportunity to support initiatives using E-Rate funding has been crucial to the advancement of our district. Our district started the first Wide Area Network (WAN) in the county in 1993. We pride ourselves on leading technological innovations in our county—first to go 1:1 for ALL students, sponsoring member of a county cyber charter school, and first to offer district curriculum in our Digital Learning Platform. While these initiatives were not solely supported by E-Rate, E-Rate enabled our district to open opportunities for our children to be *Future Ready*. Our vision is to prepare children for the world they will live in, not the world adults grew up in.

E-Rate played a critical role in the rapid and significant expansion of connectivity in schools, and the 2014 modernization was a necessary update to ensure more schools and libraries are connected to broadband. The E-Rate's investment in Category 2 funding (Wi-Fi and internal connections) is extremely valuable and could not be replaced by school, district or state funds. The Ridley School District is an example of successful implementation. The Category 2 allotment has enabled the district to update all of the network switches and access points within eleven buildings in the last two years. Our Wi-Fi provides full access for all students and staff in our school community. The network created supports a 20 GB pipe for our elementary students and a 40 GB pipe for middle and high school students. Without E-Rate, the 1993 WAN would not support our Digital Learning Platform, 1:1 tablet program, or our other personalized learning options.

The E-Rate program is a program succeeding in its mission. Any changes to the E-Rate program should be focused on expanding a successful program that has yet to reach its full potential and ensuring the FCC remains a good steward of the changes adopted 2014, allowing those changes to progress and play out as intended.

Ridley School District offers strong support for and reliance upon the E-Rate program. Being able to access and afford high-speed connectivity is central to our children's learning. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,


Lee Ann Wentzel

It is the mission of the Ridley School District to create a caring environment that gives all students the opportunity to achieve their fullest personal and academic potential in order to become productive and responsible citizens.

